

**REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE STEVE KESTELL AND  
SENATOR LENA TAYLOR, CO-CHAIRS,  
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**2009 Senate Bills 568, 569, 570, and 571**

**March 31, 2010**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bills 568, 569, 570, and 571. All of the bills were recommended by the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families.

**Senate Bill 568** permits certain foster youth who are in foster care when they reach the age of 18 years to request an agency to petition the juvenile court to extend juvenile court jurisdiction until the foster youth reaches 21 years of age.

The bill defines a foster youth as a person who is a resident of this state, is under 21 years of age, and reached the age of 18 while placed in a foster home or other out-of-home placement under a juvenile court order.

Under the bill, a foster youth may submit a request for extended juvenile court jurisdiction to the agency primarily responsible for providing services under the foster youth's dispositional order. If the agency determines that the foster youth may be eligible for extended court jurisdiction, the agency must

petition the juvenile court to extend jurisdiction. The juvenile court may extend jurisdiction if the juvenile court finds that one of several conditions are met, such as that the youth is completing secondary education, is enrolled in a postsecondary institution, or is employed for at least 80 hours per month. The order for extended juvenile court jurisdiction terminates when the foster youth reaches 21 years of age or when the juvenile court finds that specified conditions are met.

The bill has an effective date of October 1, 2010.

*Senate Bill 569* makes changes to training requirements for foster parents. The Budget Act created statewide training for foster parents, but the committee determined that it was important to include certain topics in training and that training should be ongoing and available to relatives.

The bill requires foster parent training to be completed before the first child is placed with a foster parent and on an ongoing basis. The bill also requires foster parent training to be available to kinship care relatives.

Finally, the bill lists some topics that must be included in training for foster parents. Some of the topics of training required under the bill are

parenting skills, teaching older foster children independent living skills, and proper use of foster care payments.

***Senate Bill 570*** requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create expectations for foster children and foster parents by rule. Under the bill, a written copy of the expectations must be given to each foster child and foster parent and must be explained orally.

The bill lays out what the committee concluded a foster child or parent should be able to expect from the child welfare system. For example, for foster children, the expectations include living in a safe, healthful, comfortable home where the child is treated with respect; communicating with family members; and attending court hearings. For foster parents, the expectations include being given appropriate training and being informed of how to contact the appropriate agency to receive information on and assistance in accessing supportive services for a foster child.

***Senate Bill 571*** renames the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board as the Family Policy Board and expands its membership and duties. Under the bill, the board is chaired by the governor or lieutenant governor.

The board is required to promote the coordination of resources for families in order to achieve several goals, including children who are healthy and ready for school and families that are economically self-sufficient and in which children are safe. The board must also establish a policy for the state agencies with membership on the board that highest priority should be given to promoting thriving families and healthy children through the provision of comprehensive, integrated resources based on community and family needs. The board is required to make recommendations to the governor and the legislature relating to changes needed in state programs, policies, and funding levels to improve the coordination of programs that affect families; to set priorities for state agencies based on community and family needs; to consolidate funding; and to encourage communities to form local collaborative entities consisting of public and private providers to coordinate the provision of resources.

The board is required to submit a report of its recommendations to the appropriate legislative standing committees and the governor by September 1 of each even-numbered year. Finally, the board must establish a system of communication between the board and local collaborative entities in order to

more effectively provide resources for families, and identify requirements for counties to report to state agencies with membership on the board and instances in which those reporting requirements could be consolidated or eliminated.

The bill also requires DCF to assist counties in developing programs, policies, and resources that prevent delinquency, child abuse and neglect, mental illness, alcohol or other drug dependency, developmental disability, mental infirmity, and other forms of mental or social maladjustment. In addition, the bill requires counties to provide, either directly or through community agencies and within limits of available funding, prevention resources.

We would be happy to answer any questions.

